

A WORKS CO. MANUAL · NO. 19

The Handyman Round Works

How to build a reliable property-maintenance round.

The Works Co. · Trade manuals

How to build a reliable handyman and property-maintenance round, win the customers who keep calling, and earn a steady living from the long list of jobs nobody else wants.

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How to use this manual

You are holding one part of a set of three. The manual you are reading is the thinking: how the trade actually works, what to charge, how to win the customers who keep a list for you, and how to turn one-off jobs into a steady round. The other two parts are the doing. There is a 10-file Excel toolkit, the spreadsheets that run the numbers and the admin so you are not building them from scratch. And there is a 60-prompt AI library, ready-made instructions you paste into an AI assistant to draft quotes, replies, listings and plans in minutes. Manual, toolkit, prompts. Read, calculate, write. Together they cover the whole job.

Read the manual front to back the first time. The chapters build on each other, and the early ones set up the money and the legal ground the later ones stand on. After that, treat it as a reference. When you are pricing a kitchen-tap swap, or deciding whether to take on a landlord's whole block, or working out if you can afford a second pair of hands, come back to the chapter that covers it. Every chapter tells you what to do, when to do it, what it costs, and what it earns. The appendices at the back index the toolkit, summarise the prompts, and point you to the official guidance you should not take our word for.

Two ideas run through everything. The first is reliability. In this trade, the work is rarely the hard part. Turning up when you said, doing the job properly, leaving the home clean, and answering the phone next time is the hard part, and it is also the entire business. The customers who matter most, the landlords, letting agents and property managers, hire on trust more than on price. The second idea is working within your competence. You can do a great deal yourself, and this manual shows you the breadth of it. But gas work needs Gas Safe registration, notifiable electrical work needs a registered electrician, and some jobs belong to another trade. Knowing your limits protects your customers and protects you. We are clear about where those lines fall.

A word on the money. The bundle costs £47. If it is not right for you, email refunds@theworksco.co.uk the same day and we will refund you with no friction and no questions, and you keep the manual, the toolkit and the prompts. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that

wasn't yours. You also get free updates for life: when the figures, the rules or the tools change, the new version comes to you.

Start with Chapter 1. Keep the toolkit open beside you.

PART ONE

The Foundations

The Handyman Opportunity

It is a wet Monday in March, and Gareth is on his knees in a hallway in Old Town, Swindon, fitting the third of five jobs on a list a regular customer left taped to her fridge. The list reads: rehang the kitchen door that drops on its hinges, replace a cracked toilet seat, put up two floating shelves in the alcove, silicone the bath where the old bead has gone black, and look at the side gate that no longer latches. None of it is glamorous. None of it is hard, for him. It is the day's work, and it is worth £180.

He has been here since half eight. The door took twenty minutes once he packed the hinge with a matchstick and longer screws. The toilet seat was a five-minute swap, the kind of thing the customer could probably have done herself but never quite got round to. The shelves are the fiddly bit — finding the studs, drilling clean, getting them dead level so a mug does not slide to one end. While he is up the stepladder, his phone buzzes. It is a letting agent he did a job for last month: a tenant has moved out of a flat on the other side of town, and the inventory clerk has flagged a broken extractor fan, two blown bulbs in the bathroom, a sticking bedroom door and a patch of filler-and-paint needed where a shelf was ripped off the wall. Can he turn it round before the new tenant moves in on Friday. He texts back: yes, Wednesday morning, he will send a quote tonight.

He is sealing the bath when the neighbour leans over the fence. She has seen the van. Does he do shelves too, because she has had a flat-pack wardrobe in boxes in the spare room since Christmas and her husband will not look at it. He gives her a card and says he will text her a price. That is three pieces of work from one driveway on one ordinary morning: a regular customer's list, an agent's void flat, and a neighbour who became a lead because the van was parked outside.

This is the handyman round. It is not a single big job that makes you. It is the steady accumulation of small ones, the customers who keep a list for you, and the agents who put you on speed dial. This chapter is about why that round is worth building, who it suits, who it does not, and what the next year can realistically look like if you start.

Why a handyman round, and why now

The demand for small jobs never runs out. Every home has a list. Shelves that need putting up, a tap that drips, a door that sticks, a fence panel down after a gale, a flat-pack wardrobe still in its box, a TV waiting to go on the wall. These are the jobs no single specialist trade wants to turn out for. A plumber will not drive across town to change a washer. A joiner is

not interested in one shelf. The person who will do the long list of odd jobs — and do it well, and turn up when they say — is rare, and that rarity is the opportunity.

Three things make it work as a business rather than a series of favours.

The first is the sheer volume of small work. An ageing housing stock means more things breaking. Busy households mean fewer people with the time or skill to fix them. There is more demand than there are reliable people to meet it, in nearly every town in the country.

The second is the recurring channel: **landlords, letting and estate agents, and property managers**. A homeowner might call you twice a year. An agent managing eighty properties has something going wrong every week — a void flat to make ready, a reactive repair a tenant has reported, a planned bit of maintenance before a new let. Get on one agent's approved list and prove you are reliable, and you have a stream of work that does not depend on you finding a new customer every Monday. This is the part that turns an unpredictable trade into a steady book, and it is the thread running through this whole manual.

The third is the low cost of starting. If you already own a decent set of tools and have a vehicle, you can begin for very little. A realistic start-up cost is **£500 to £3,000**, and at the lower end of that, most of it is insurance, a few missing tools and the cost of looking professional. Few legitimate businesses start this cheaply. You are not signing a lease, buying stock or hiring staff before you have earned a penny. You are taking skills and tools you may already have and putting them to paid use, which means your downside is small and your first jobs can be funding your second week. Chapter 4 covers the kit in detail, and Chapter 3 the legal and insurance setup, so you spend that money in the right order.

COACH MOMENT Your edge in this trade is not that you are the most skilled person who ever held a drill. It is that you answer the phone, you turn up when you said, you do tidy work, and you clean up after yourself. That sounds almost too simple to be a business advantage. It is the whole game. Most people who let customers down do not do it because they cannot do the work — they do it because they are disorganised, overcommitted or unreliable. If you are the person who shows up, you will never be short of work.

And now, in 2026, there is a fourth thing in your favour: the admin that used to sink one-person trades is largely solved. AI can turn a few bullet points into a clear quote, draft the email to an agent, write your job descriptions and review replies, and help you price a job you have not done before. The Prompt Library that comes with this manual is built for exactly this. The tools that used to make running a business feel like a second unpaid job are now cheap and fast, which means you can spend your time on the tools that earn — the ones in the van. The trade itself has not changed in a hundred years; somebody still has to

drill the hole and hang the door. What has changed is that the paperwork around it no longer has to cost you your evenings.

What you can actually earn

Honesty matters here, because this trade rewards the steady builder, not the get-rich dreamer. The money is real but it is earned hour by hour, and it grows as your round grows. There are three broad brackets.

Stage	Realistic annual figure (UK, 2026)
Part-time	£12,000–£25,000
Full-time solo	£30,000–£55,000
With staff / multiple operators	£70,000–£150,000+ revenue

Part-time, fitting jobs around another commitment, you are looking at **£12,000 to £25,000 a year**. That is evenings and weekends, or a few days a week, building a customer list while keeping your risk low.

Full-time and solo, with a round that keeps you busy, **£30,000 to £55,000** is a fair expectation. Where you land in that range depends on your rates, how full your diary is, how much repeat and agent work you have smoothed your income with, and how little time you waste on travel and unpaid quoting.

With staff or multiple operators — a second van, someone working under your name — revenue of **£70,000 to £150,000 and beyond** is possible, though now you are running a maintenance firm and managing people rather than just doing the work. We cover that choice properly in Chapter 11, including the real risk of sending someone else into a customer's home with your reputation attached.

The pricing underneath these numbers is simple and consistent. You charge **£30 to £50 an hour** with a minimum or call-out charge so a short job is still worth the trip. A half-day runs **£100 to £180**, a full day **£180 to £320**. Many common jobs are better priced as a fixed per-job rate: a flat-pack assembly at **£40 to £90**, a TV mount at **£60 to £120**, a shelf at **£30 to £60**. Gareth's £180 Monday was a full day of five small jobs, priced as a day rather than nickel-and-dimed by the hour, which the customer prefers and which pays him fairly. The art is in not letting the small "quick favour" jobs quietly eat a day you should have been paid properly for. We go deep on pricing and quoting in Chapter 7, with a Pricing Calculator in the Toolkit to take the guesswork out of it.

One more number worth knowing early: the VAT threshold sits at **£90,000** of turnover. As a solo operator you are unlikely to brush against it in your first year or two, but it shapes decisions later about whether to grow, take on staff or stay a high-earning one-person band. Chapter 3 explains where it bites.

The model: repeat domestic plus landlord and agent maintenance

Hold these two engines in your head, because together they are the whole business.

The first is the **repeat domestic customer**. This is the homeowner who, once they trust you, stops looking for anyone else. They keep a running list and call you when it gets long enough for a half-day or a day. They are often the time-poor — busy professionals who would rather pay than spend their Saturday on a wardrobe — and older people who want a trusted, reliable person they can call and not worry about. Win one of these and look after them, and they are worth far more than the first job suggests, because they come back for years and they tell their friends. Referrals are the single biggest engine of growth in this trade.

The second is the **landlord and agent maintenance relationship**. This is the recurring goldmine. It is higher volume, faster turnaround and less emotional than domestic work — an agent does not want a chat, they want the fan fixed before Friday and a clean invoice. It smooths your income across the year, because while garden and fence work peaks in spring and summer and draught-proofing and indoor jobs fill the autumn and winter, an agent's portfolio generates work in every season. This is why we keep returning to it: a couple of solid agent relationships can be the difference between a feast-and-famine diary and a steady book. Chapters 9 and 10 are devoted to winning and keeping this work.

MENTOR MOMENT When I started, I chased every job that came up and treated them all the same. It took me a year to understand that not all customers are equal. One agent who trusted me was worth more than thirty one-off jobs from strangers I would never see again, because the agent kept coming back and never haggled. Build your round deliberately. Aim, in your first year, for a list of repeat domestic customers you can name, plus one or two agent or landlord relationships you are nursing carefully. That is the spine of a business that lasts.

Who it suits, and who it does not

This is not for everyone, and we would rather you knew that now than after you had spent your money.

It suits you if you are genuinely handy across a range of small jobs and a quick learner when you meet a new one. If you are reliable and tidy — you turn up, you clean up, you do

not leave dust on the skirting. If you are good with people, because you are working in their homes and trust is the product. If you are honest about the limits of your competence and will happily say "that is a gas job, I will get you the right person" rather than have a go. And if you are organised enough to answer messages, quote promptly and not double-book yourself.

It does not suit you if you are unreliable or run late as a habit, because one no-show can cost you a customer and the three referrals they would have brought. It does not suit you if you oversell skills you do not have, or would be tempted to tackle gas work or notifiable electrical work you are not qualified for — that is dangerous and illegal, and we are firm about it throughout this manual. It does not suit you if you are messy, or if you find dealing with people draining rather than energising.

There is no shame in reading those lists and deciding this is not your trade. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that was never going to be yours. Chapter 2 gives you a proper self-assessment scorecard to make that call honestly.

How to use this manual, the Toolkit and the Prompt Library

This bundle is the manual you are reading, a **10-file Excel Toolkit** and a **60-prompt AI Library**, and it costs **£47** with a same-day, no-friction refund if it is not for you — keep the materials either way, and you get free updates for life.

The manual runs in order: foundations, then the craft, then customers, the commercial work with agents and landlords, growing, the modern tools, and the decade ahead. Read it through once, then come back to chapters as you need them. The Toolkit turns the advice into working files — a self-assessment scorecard, an accounting tracker, a job database, a pricing calculator, a quote template, quality standards, and a 90-day checklist. The Prompt Library does the writing and thinking work: quotes, agent outreach emails, job descriptions, review replies. Throughout, we point you to the right tool at the right moment, so you are never left wondering how to actually do the thing we just described.

What success looks like in one year

Picture Gareth twelve months from a standing start. He has a phone full of repeat domestic customers who keep lists for him, a Google Business Profile with thirty-odd genuine five-star reviews, and two letting agents who call him first when a flat goes void. His diary is full enough that he is turning down the jobs that do not suit him and keeping the ones that pay. He is somewhere in that £30,000-to-£55,000 solo bracket and climbing, his income smoothed by the agent work so that no single quiet week frightens him. He has stopped chasing strangers and started choosing his work.

None of that is luck. It is the predictable result of doing ordinary things reliably for a year: answering quickly, quoting fairly, working tidily, and asking for the review at the end of every good job. The round compounds. Each happy customer feeds the next through referrals, each kept promise to an agent earns the next call, and each five-star review makes the following stranger more likely to choose you.

That is the round. It is built one tidy job, one fair quote and one kept promise at a time. The next chapter helps you decide, honestly, whether it is for you — and then we get you set up, legal and clear on exactly where your competence ends.

Is This For You?

On a wet Wednesday in March, Lorraine parks her van outside a 1960s semi in Crewe with a list in her hand. Not a job sheet from an agent, not a booking from an app — a list. The customer, a retired teacher named Margaret, has written it out in biro on the back of an envelope. A dripping kitchen tap. A bedroom door that has dropped on its hinge and catches the carpet. Two pictures to hang in the hall. A cracked bead of sealant round the bath. And, added at the bottom in different ink because she thought of it that morning, "could you look at the gate?"

None of these is a big job. No single specialist trade wants them. A plumber would not cross the city for one washer. A carpenter would laugh at one door. But Lorraine does the lot in three and a half hours, charges Margaret £140, makes the tea herself when offered, sweeps up the sealant offcuts, and leaves. As she packs the van, Margaret says the thing that pays Lorraine's mortgage: "I'll keep a list for you." That sentence — repeated across forty or fifty households and a couple of letting agents — is the whole business. It is also the reason this chapter exists, because the round only works if you are the right person to build it.

This chapter is here to help you decide honestly, before you spend a penny. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that was never going to be yours.

What the work actually rewards

Strip away the marketing and a handyman round rewards two things above all: **reliability** and **breadth**. You turn up when you said you would, you do tidy work that lasts, and you can handle the long, varied list — flat-pack one hour, a leaking tap the next, a fence panel after lunch. People do not call you because you are the best plumber in Crewe. They call you because you are the person who actually answers, actually arrives, and can sort most of the list in one visit.

That is a different temperament from the specialist. A specialist goes deep on one trade. You go broad across many, knowing your limits at the edge of each. The customer who keeps a list values the breadth — they would rather have one trusted person for ten small things than chase ten tradespeople for ten small jobs.

It is worth being clear about what "handy" really means here, because people misjudge themselves in both directions. Some assume they are not handy enough because they could not rewire a house or plumb in a bathroom from scratch — but the round is not built on

those jobs. It is built on the long tail of small, repeated work: the shelf, the door, the washer, the sealant, the flat-pack, the blind that will not hang straight. Others assume they are very handy because they enjoy DIY at weekends — but doing your own jobs at your own pace is not the same as doing a stranger's list to a standard, on time, and at a price that pays. The honest middle is the sweet spot: competent across the common jobs, careful at the edges, and willing to learn the rest properly rather than guess on a customer's wall.

So the question is not "am I a brilliant tradesperson?" It is closer to "am I genuinely handy, do I learn fast, and can people trust me in their home?" If that is you, the round will build. If it is not, no amount of advertising will save it, because in this trade the reputation is the marketing.

Green lights — the markers that say yes

Read these honestly. You do not need every one, but the more you tick, the more the round will come naturally.

You are genuinely handy and a quick learner across trades. You can already do a fair spread — put up a shelf that is level and stays up, assemble flat-pack without spare screws, change a tap washer, hang a door, run a tidy bead of sealant. Where you cannot yet, you can learn the job safely from a good video and a bit of care, and you know the difference between "I have not done this but I can" and "this is beyond me." Breadth matters more than depth here. You will get faster at everything by doing the variety.

You are reliable and tidy. This is the one that beats everything else. The trade is full of people who are skilled but flaky — they do not call back, they turn up late or not at all, they leave dust and offcuts behind. If you answer messages the same day, arrive when you said, and leave a customer's home cleaner than the average, you will out-earn more talented people who do not. Margaret kept a list for Lorraine because Lorraine came back when she said she would, not because the door was hung to cabinetmaker standards.

You are good with people. You are working in someone's home, often when they are out at work and trusting you with a key, or sitting with an older customer who wants a chat as much as a repair. You need to be easy to have around — polite, honest about what you find, calm when a "quick job" turns out to be three jobs. Letting agents and property managers, the recurring channel, are buying exactly this: someone they can send into a tenant's flat without worrying.

You are honest about your competence limits. The best operators say "no" cleanly. You know that **gas work requires Gas Safe registration** and you never touch a gas appliance or pipework unless you hold it. You know **notifiable electrical work requires a registered or Part P electrician**, while minor, non-notifiable jobs within your competence are fine. You

do not disturb suspected asbestos in an older home. You refer the work you should not do — and you keep the customer, because referring well is itself a service. Knowing your limits protects the customer and protects you.

You are organised enough. Not an administrator — organised enough. You can keep a list of who is waiting, quote within a day, send a simple invoice, get paid, and remember which customer asked about a gate three weeks ago. The Toolkit and the Prompt Library do a lot of this lifting, but you have to be the kind of person who does not leave a quote unsent for a fortnight.

COACH MOMENT Score yourself on the five green lights, one to five each, right now, before you read on. Be hard on the two that matter most: reliability and honesty about limits. A four on handiness and a two on reliability is a worse bet for this trade than the reverse — you can learn to hang a door far faster than you can learn to be the person who always turns up. If reliability is your weak number, the good news is it is a decision, not a talent. The round is built by people who simply decided to be dependable.

Red flags — the markers that say wait, or no

These are not insults. They are honest mirrors. If several are you, this trade will hurt you and your customers.

You are unreliable. You mean well but you do not call back, you over-promise on timing, you let the day drift. In an office that is annoying. In someone's home, with their kitchen half apart and their key in your pocket, it is the end of the round. This trade punishes flakiness harder than almost any other because it runs entirely on trust and repeat custom.

You oversell skills you do not have. You say yes to win the job, then learn it badly on the customer's wall. The shelf comes down. The "fixed" leak floods the cupboard a week later. Word travels in a town like Crewe faster than any advert you could buy, and it travels in the wrong direction.

You would tackle gas or notifiable electrical work you are not qualified for. This is the line that is not negotiable. If your instinct on a gas hob or a consumer-unit change is "I'll have a go," this trade is dangerous in your hands. It is not about confidence; it is about the law and people's lives. The operators who last are the ones who say "that is Gas Safe, I'll get you someone" without a flicker of ego.

You are messy or late. You do decent work but leave dust on the skirting, footprints on the carpet, a bin bag of offcuts by the door, and you arrive forty minutes after the window with no message. Customers notice the carpet more than the carpentry. The messy-and-late operator gets one visit and never a list.

MENTOR MOMENT I have watched two people start handyman rounds in the same town in the same month. One was the better craftsman by a distance. The other was steadier — answered every message that day, swept up every time, sent every invoice that evening, and said no to the jobs beyond him without apology. Eighteen months on, the steadier one had a full book and three letting agents calling him weekly. The craftsman had drifted back to working for someone else, baffled. The trade had quietly told him what it tells everyone: it pays for trust before it pays for talent. Be the steady one. The skill grows with the years anyway.

The honest reality of the money

Here is the part most people skip and then resent. The money in this trade is **steady, not spectacular, and it is slow at the start** because you are building a round from nothing.

The income brackets are real and they are these: **part-time, around £12,000 to £25,000 a year; full-time solo, around £30,000 to £55,000; with staff or multiple operators, £70,000 to £150,000 or more in revenue.** Your day rate sits in a sensible band — **£30 to £50 an hour, a half-day £100 to £180, a full day £180 to £320**, plus fixed per-job prices for the common work (a flat-pack £40 to £90, a TV mount £60 to £120, a shelf £30 to £60). Lorraine's £140 morning at Margaret's is a normal, good half-day, not a windfall.

What that means in practice: month one is quiet. You will have gaps in the diary, days with one small job, and a nagging worry that this was a mistake. That is not failure — that is the round not being built yet. The engine of this business is the **repeat domestic customer who keeps a list for you and the landlord, agent or property manager who puts you on their on-call list.** Those relationships compound. The first agent relationship might take you two months to win and then feed you work for years. By the time you have forty regulars and two or three agents, your diary fills itself and the worry is gone — but that is month nine or twelve, not week two.

The start cost is genuinely low, which is the upside of the slow build. A realistic figure is **£500 to £3,000** — less if you already own most of your tools and have a vehicle. You are not buying a franchise or fitting out a unit. You are buying public liability insurance, filling the gaps in your tool kit, and putting fuel in the van. (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 cover the setup and kit in full; the firm competence and compliance rules sit in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5.)

So the honest deal is this. Low cost to start, modest but real money once the round is built, very steady income after that because reliability turns one-off jobs into a book of repeat customers and agents. If you need £4,000 in your first month, this is the wrong trade for that month. If you can give it a season to build and you are the reliable, broad, honest person it rewards, it pays you for years.

The self-assessment scorecard

Reading a list of green and red flags is one thing; scoring yourself coldly is another. **Toolkit file 01, the Self-Assessment Scorecard**, turns this chapter into numbers. It walks you through the five green lights and the four red flags, weights reliability and honesty about limits the way the trade actually weights them, and gives you a single honest read on whether to proceed, proceed with a plan to shore up a weak area, or spend the £47 on that coffee instead.

Use it now, before Chapter 3. If it tells you to fix something first — say your reliability score is low, or you are not yet honest enough with yourself about a skill gap — that is the most valuable thing this manual can do for you. A handyman round built on an honest scorecard outlasts one built on hope.

If the answer is yes

If you have read the red flags and recognised yourself in the green ones — handy and quick to learn, reliable and tidy, good in someone's home, clear and honest about where your competence ends, organised enough to quote and invoice and remember — then this is for you, and the rest of the manual is the build.

And if the answer is no, or not yet, we mean what we said. The £47 is refundable the same day, with no friction — email refunds@theworksco.co.uk, keep every file, and we will not ask why. You also keep free updates for life if you stay. We would genuinely rather you walked away clear-eyed than ran a business that was never yours to enjoy. A manual cannot make you the reliable, broad, honest person the round rewards. It can only show you the road once you know that person is you.

If it is you, Margaret is out there with an envelope and a biro, about to write a list. Chapter 3 gets you legal, insured, clear on your limits, and ready to knock on the first door.

Setting Up the Business

It is a Friday morning in Redditch, and Imran is sitting at his kitchen table with a mug of tea, a notebook, and a job already booked for Monday. Three weeks ago he hung a neighbour's mirror as a favour. The neighbour told a friend, the friend runs a couple of rental flats, and now there is a letting agent who wants to know if Imran is "set up properly" before they put him on their list. That phrase is the reason he is at the table instead of out with his drill. Set up properly. He is not entirely sure what it means, and he does not want to guess.

By the end of the morning he will know. Setting up a handyman business in the UK is not complicated, and it does not cost much. What it asks of you is honesty about two things: how you are taxed, and what you are legally allowed to touch. Get those right on a Friday and you can take that agent's first job on Monday without a knot in your stomach.

This chapter walks the same path Imran walks. We will keep the figures plain and the limits firm, because the limits are what make the rest of the business safe to build.

Sole Trader or Limited Company

Almost every handyperson starts as a **sole trader**. It is the simplest legal form there is. You register with HMRC, you keep records of what comes in and what goes out, and once a year you file a Self Assessment tax return. There is no company to run, no separate accounts to file, and the admin is light enough to do at the kitchen table.

You register as a sole trader through the GOV.UK website. You need to do this by the **5 October after the end of the tax year in which you started trading** — so if Imran starts in this tax year, he registers by 5 October of the next one. There is no fee. The whole thing takes minutes, and HMRC sends you a Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR) to use on your return.

As a sole trader you pay Income Tax and National Insurance on your profit — what is left after your allowable business costs. You and the business are the same legal entity, which has one real consequence: if something goes wrong and you owe money, your personal assets are on the line. This is exactly why insurance, covered below, is not optional.

A **limited company** is a separate legal entity. It can protect your personal assets if the business runs into trouble, and at higher profits it can be more tax-efficient. The cost is more admin: you file accounts and a confirmation statement with Companies House every

That was Chapter 1.

The other twenty chapters, the Excel toolkit and the
AI prompt library are in the full bundle.

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